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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [BA](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [REGION](#) [OFFICIALS](#)
SUBJECT: KING AND ADMIRAL FALLON CONSULT ON REGIONAL
CHALLENGES

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary

¶1. (C) King Hamad told CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon, in their first meeting March 22, that Bahrain and the United States are in business together as real allies. Although Bahrain supports a peaceful Iranian nuclear program, "the Iranian program is not peaceful." In the King's view, Iran intends to build a nuclear device and dominate the region. Iraq had always served as a strategic balance to Iran, and it is important for Iraq to play this role again. The King criticized those who say the United States has lost in Iraq. He countered that it is the Iraqis who lost, because the U.S. came to help build the country, and they did not take advantage of that. To send a strong message on security, the King recommended that the U.S. capture and imprison terrorist commanders, not just the low-level fighters. End Summary.

Bahrain a "Real Ally" of U.S.

¶2. (C) In their initial meeting March 22, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa welcomed CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon to Bahrain and said he was glad Bahrain and the United States "are in business together." He referred to the long-standing U.S.-Bahrain relationship and thanked the United States for its support for stability in the Gulf region. Bahrain, he said, has always felt secure because of the presence of the U.S. Navy. Bahrain wants to be a "real ally" and participate in exercises and operations with the United States. Admiral Fallon acknowledged the unique relationship and said the U.S. has a strong sense of comfort working with the GOB.

¶3. (C) Achieving a stable Gulf region, the King said, requires a collective effort on the part of the GCC. The GCC members "shouldn't be enemies or friends to one another, they should be allies." Sometimes GCC countries allow small disputes, such as minor border differences, to cause problems. They should forget about these things for at least 25 years in order to focus on important things, the King said, noting that Bahrain and Qatar had quarreled over the status of Hawar Island. "When we solved this problem, we felt relieved."

Strong Iraq to Balance Iran

¶4. (C) The King said that Bahrain had identified the threat from Iran many years ago, when Khomeini tried to export the revolution. When confronted with accusations of Iranian

meddling in neighboring countries, the King reported, Iranian leaders say this is not GOI policy. Rather, it is just some independent actors inside the government carrying out their own policies. The King dismissed these excuses, saying the GOI is responsible for the activities of all entities under its authority. Iran intends to build a nuclear device and to dominate the region, the King said. Bahrain supports a peaceful Iranian nuclear program, "but it's not peaceful." Iraq had always served as a strategic balance to Iran, and it is important for Iraq once again to play this role. But Iraq, the King said, "is ill with internal problems."

15. (C) The King said he does not like that Iraqis blame the United States for their problems. Bahrain, he said, tells Iraqis that the United States came to help build the country, and they should recognize this. Iraqi terrorists declare that the U.S. has lost in Iraq. This is not right, the King said, it is the Iraqis who lost. The United States wants a new Iraq; why don't Iraqis want it too? The King noted he had met with Saudi King Abdullah two days earlier. King Abdullah provided a briefing on his meeting with Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad in early March. Abdullah reportedly told Ahmadi-Nejad to "keep his hands off the Gulf and Iraq." Ahmadi-Nejad claimed Iran was not interfering in the affairs of its neighbors. The King told Admiral Fallon that he was hopeful and confident Iraq will be strong, united, and "able to face and balance the Iranian threat."

Imprison Terrorist Commanders

16. (C) Admiral Fallon observed that the United States and Bahrain have the same security objectives for the region.

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Iraq is the biggest immediate challenge, and we have to make progress very soon to show people Iraq can move in the right direction and serve to counter Iran's desire to control and influence the region. In addition to security, people in Iraq need hope. The U.S. will also concentrate on economic growth and political development in Iraq. The King said that to send a strong message on security, the U.S. should put terrorist commanders like Muqtada Al Sadr in jail, not just the low-level fighters. There can be no negotiations - they are terrorists. They took the decision to fight, and they should feel the consequences. Al Qaeda leaders are in caves. Imagine if Bin Laden were able to travel freely to raise money, like Al Sadr or Hizballah's Hassan Nasrallah, the King asked rhetorically. In response to Admiral Fallon's question on ways to engage Sunnis in Iraq's Anbar province, the King suggested that the U.S. talk to Jordan's King Abdullah, who is experienced and knowledgeable on this part of Iraq.

17. (U) Admiral Fallon cleared this cable.

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